

38. (Amended) A locking connector for electrically interconnecting two or more electrical conductors:

an electrical contact component electrically interengaged with a first conductor, said contact component including a contact section and an opening that receives a second conductor;

and

at least one spring locking clip that is spring biased to grip the second conductor and hold the second conductor in electrical interengagement with said contact section, while resisting disengagement of the second conductor from said contact section, said clip having a grip locking end portion that is transversely curved across the entire width of said grip locking end portion to conform to the profile of the second conductor.

39. (Amended) A locking connector for electrically interconnecting two or more electrical conductors comprising:

an electrical contact component electrically interengaged with a first conductor, said contact component being made of metal sheet material having a contact section, another section in parallel spaced relation from said contact section, an intermediate section that interconnects one end of each of said contact section and said another section, an opening extending through said intermediate section that receives a second conductor, and an intumed lip integral with said contact section in axial spaced relation from said opening in said intermediate section that acts as a stop for said second conductor when inserted through said opening in said intermediate section;

at least one spring locking clip that is spring biased to grip the second conductor and hold the second conductor in electrical interengagement with said contact section, while resisting disengagement of the second conductor from said contact section; and

c1 a release hole formed through said contact section transversely offset from said opening for receiving a clip release element, said clip having a portion extending transversely outward of said opening in line with said release hole for engagement by the clip release element upon insertion of the clip release element into the release hole to urge said clip into an open condition to permit unobstructed insertion and removal of the second conductor into and out of said contact component.

40. (Amended) The connector of claim 39 wherein said clip has a first segment that fits tightly between said intermediate section and another inturned lip integral with said another section in spaced relation from said intermediate section to secure said clip to said contact component, and a second segment depending from said first segment at an angle, said second segment being spring biased toward said contact section.

c2 42. (Amended) A locking connector for electrically interconnecting two or more electrical conductors comprising:

an electrical contact component electrically interengaged with a first conductor, said contact component including a contact section and an opening that received a second conductor;

at least one spring locking clip that is spring biased to grip the second conductor and hold the second conductor in electrical interengagement with said contact section, while resisting disengagement of the second conductor from said contact section, said clip having a grip locking end portion in alignment with said opening that is spring biased to grip the second conductor, said grip locking end portion being transversely curved across the full width of said grip locking end portion to conform to the profile of the second conductor; *wherein*
and

a release hole formed through said contact section transversely offset from said opening for receiving a clip release element, said clip having a portion extending transversely outward of said opening in line with said release hole for engagement by the clip release element upon insertion of the clip release element into the release hole to urge said clip into an open condition to permit unobstructed insertion and removal of the second conductor into and out of said contact component.

44. (Amended) A locking connector for electrically interconnecting two or more electrical conductors comprising:

an electrical contact component electrically interengaged with a first conductor, said contact component being made of metal sheet material having a contact section,

another section in parallel spaced relation from said contact section, an intermediate section that interconnects one end of each of said contact section and said another section, an opening extending through said intermediate section that receives a second conductor, and an inturned lip integral with said contact section in axial spaced relation from said opening in said intermediate section that acts as a stop for said second conductor when inserted through said opening in said intermediate section;

and

at least one spring locking clip that is spring biased to grip the second conductor and hold the second conductor in electrical interengagement with said contact section, while resisting disengagement of the second conductor from said contact section.

Please cancel claims 24, 26, 30, 31, 41, 43, 45 and 46 without prejudice and add the following new claims:

47. (New) The connector of claim 44 wherein said clip has a first segment that fits tightly between said intermediate section and another inturned lip integral with said another section in spaced relation from said intermediate section to secure said clip to said contact component, and a second segment depending from said first segment at an angle, said second segment being spring biased toward said contact section.

48. (New) The connector of claim 44 wherein said first conductor is integral with said contact component.

49. (New) The connector of claim 44 wherein said first conductor has a wire terminal connection with said contact component.

50. (New) The connector of claim 44 wherein said contact section includes an elongate rib formed in said contact section transversely offset from said opening for locating the second conductor relative to said clip; and

c4 a release hole extending through said elongate rib transversely offset from said opening for receiving a clip release element, said clip having a portion extending transversely outwardly of said opening in line with said release hole for engagement by the clip release element upon insertion of the clip release element into the release hole to urge said clip into an open condition to permit unobstructed insertion and removal of the second conductor into and out of said contact component.

Marked-up versions of amended claims 38-40, 42 and 44 are included in an Appendix attached hereto.